

*K* Ireland - Roman Catholics (Appendix) 2

A  
DISSERTATION,

ADDRESSED TO

A FRIEND,

ON THE

PROPRIETY OF ADMITTING

THE

ROMAN CATHOLICS OF IRELAND

TO A SHARE IN THE

*ELECTIVE FRANCHISE.*

---

DUBLIN:

PRINTED BY P. BYRNE, No. 108, GRAFTON-STREET.

M.DCC.XCII.



AN  
E X T R A C T  
FROM THE  
CIRCULAR LETTER  
OF THE  
GENERAL COMMITTEE  
OF THE  
*ROMAN CATHOLICS OF IRELAND.*

“ WHAT we ask is a participation in the benefits of the free constitution of Ireland, by an admission to vote at elections for knights of the shire to represent us in parliament ; in this however we mean, if it should be necessary, to submit to a modification, *viz.* That in addition to the qualifications of forty shillings, it should be permitted to a Roman Catholic freeholder to vote, only when he rents and occupies, or possesses

fesses in fee, or for life, a farm of twenty pounds  
 per annum; anticipating any groundless objec-  
 tions, from a sudden alteration in the state of  
 election interests, we should content ourselves  
 with establishing the principle, that we are to be  
 considered as members of a free constitution, and  
 with providing for the Roman Catholic tenantry  
 a security against the oppressive, intolerable, and  
 too frequent hardships, of being deprived of their  
 tenant right and leasehold interest."





---

A  
DISSERTATION, &c.

---

THE Roman Catholics ask a share in the privilege of election, not as a matter of speculative right, not upon any general principles of liberty, or as a conclusion from any given premises, either of natural or even of constitutional rights; they ask it as a protection, and as a requisite security, which they now have not, for the exercise of every legal right—they ask it from a practical sense of the evils they feel, by being excluded from it.—It is necessary for the free enjoyment of their industry and property; to secure a fair dispensation of justice

A

both

both criminal and civil, and to secure them that just estimation and importance, without which, in human tribunals, they cannot obtain it.

It is a known fact (and, on reflection, we shall find it must be so) that the Roman Catholics have been, and are every day, turned out of very beneficial farms; deprived of the maintenance of themselves and their families; have lost their honest occupations, and the exercise (the most beneficial to the state) of their industry and capitals; because they could not vote at an election, and to make room for those that could—*a fortiori*, they have, in multitudes of instances, failed to obtain leases—nor can they ever obtain them, *on equal terms*.—This is a severe oppression of the Roman Catholic tenantry, from one end of the kingdom to the other—they do not ask to share with Protef-

tants



tants the privilege of voting at elections, but for the privilege of being tenants to Protestant landlords: and not to Protestant landlords only, but even to landed proprietors of their own persuasion—the exclusion from that franchise will tell against them, whenever there is room for competition, or room for favour; and where there is not room for the one or the other, where the election-spirit runs high (and it does run high in Ireland) it operates, more or less, in every transaction of life—it is well known how many contentions arise out of it, and with what bitterness many civil and even criminal litigations are, more or less, directly or remotely connected with it.—A protestant plaintiff or defendant can serve an election interest—a man will more desire to oblige, and more fear to offend, him, who can oblige again; and this power of reciprocal obligation is, in all things, a motive to partiality; it will operate most, where it ought not



to operate at all. For, the administration of justice is, by our constitution, united with the right of election: the same freehold is the qualification for both——exclusive privileges are also a principle of animosity; the Roman Catholics think they are warranted in supplicating, either that tribunals may be instituted *for them*, in which the proprietors of an exclusive privilege, held in derogation of them, may not decide on their lives and properties; or, what is much more simple and natural, That, by opening the privilege, the evil may be done away; the evil of a tribunal, partial by its very constitution. There is also a material difference in privileges; there are privileges confined to a few: such is the peerage—to have it, is an honour; not to have it, is no humiliation. But, in the privileges which are communicated to many, as the forty-shilling right of election, to possess it, is a considerable



considerable distinction ; but, to be excluded from it, is a disgrace—no one is proud to be a man ; but, an eunuch is an object of contempt.

The Roman Catholics, therefore, complain that, in their case, the current of justice is polluted with partiality, animosity, and contempt : these things (with due submission to the three branches of the Irish legislature) they contend to be unfavourable to justice.

They presume it will not be urged, that the smallest inconvenience whatsoever to others, is to be of more weight with the legislature, than the greatest benefit to them : they desire to have it again and again remembered, that they ask only a *small* participation ; there neither is, nor can be, any reason for refusing it *now*, except a determination to refuse it *for ever*.

That

That determination, as it cannot be avowed, so it ought not to be formed—there can be no reason for it, (if it is to be called a reason) except one—that the Roman Catholics of Ireland cannot be safely trusted with any degree of political power. They are confident that whoever sincerely means to contribute to the alleviation of their situation, must consider that idea, as utterly incompatible with their relief—they insist (and it is the only thing on which they do insist) that it may be considered, as a fundamental and indispensable condition to the system of a more liberal and happy policy, that they are no longer to be looked upon as dangerous to the Government. They will not admit, nor submit it to be the idea, that they are an object of just suspicion, apprehension, and jealousy, upon any ground whatsoever, either civil or religious—they solemnly and formally protest against it, not only as injurious and groundless

in

in itself; but, as the root and baneful cause of all their former persecutions, and all their present oppressive disqualifications.—They are not worse subjects than any others: and, because, under every possible discouragement, they are not worse, they contend that they are even better; and that, as such, instead of being wholly distrusted, they deserve to be more fully relied on. They contend that there is no kind and no extent of right, that will not be safely lodged in their hands, when the course of legislative wisdom shall bring their relief to its fullest maturity. And if they recede, in any respect, from their full claims; and ask a partial, not a total; a gradual, not a sudden relief; they desire that their moderation may be understood to be, as it is, not an admission of any imputation, but a necessary sacrifice to the remnant of irrational prejudices and unjust antipathies; a tenderness for the weakness of their protestant brethren;



brethren ; the effect, not of meanness, but of a public spirited prudence.

There is no point of positive claim, or of just pretensions, which they will not wave, postpone or relinquish, out of a spirit of accommodation, in favour of the interest or the convenience of any branch of the legislature, or any number of respectable individuals. But they think that in return, they have a right to desire, that they may not be considered as suspected persons ; much less, that the suspicion should not be taken as a principle to controul the measure and direct the mode of their relief. When the evils are considered, which have proceeded from the real or pretended apprehensions concerning the designs of the Papists, it will not be thought to argue any malevolence towards the Protestants of Ireland, that they desire, entreat, and supplicate, that the bitter source of



woe may no more be mentioned ; from thence has proceeded the proscription of their religious rights, the violation of their domestic peace, the relaxation of their domestic ties, and the long oppression of a code of laws invented to destroy them.

The Roman Catholics assert that they are good men, but they do not pretend to be angels.—It is said not to be in the power of Omnipotence to make that which has been, not to have been—and therefore oblivion is the only remedy for irreparable wrongs.—The Papists of Ireland have sustained many injuries—they have inflicted none—and, wishing to lay a foundation of eternal reconciliation, they call upon their protestant brethren, not only to desist from drawing conclusions to their disadvantage, from their principles or their numbers ; but, if possible, to expunge from their minds, that a political distinction between Protestant and Papist was ever

thought of.—It is impossible that the origin, the real cause and fatal effects of these terrors should not, some time or other, become a subject of popular discussion, if they are to be preserved as an immortal principle of action : be it here said that the code of penal laws was not the effect of fear ; for men do not oppress those whom they fear, but those whom they do not—that pretext, for such it was, and the consequent distinction between Protestant and Catholic, has done all that it can do.

Now the Protestants have nothing to gain, and every thing to lose.—The operation of the ~~penal~~ laws, through the medium of infinite private calamity, and much public detriment, has put the Protestants in possession of three-fourths of the landed property of the kingdom—and, possessed of all that is beneficial, and all that is honourable in church and state ; can  
any

any thing be more absurd, than for *them* perpetually to remind those whom they have deprived of all these things, that there is a perpetual irreconcilable opposition between their interests. Would it not be a much more natural and wiser policy, in the sect of the *rich reigning few*, to persuade that of the *humble and many*, that their interests were not at all incompatible ; that one was not the object of fear, nor the other of invasion ; and that, though the enjoyment was different, the right was the same ; and that, with regard to all constitutional objects, the possession of the one was the expectancy of the other.—A Papist can reason as well as a Protestant ; and he can argue, with infallible conclusion, that if he is of necessity dangerous to a Protestant Government, a Protestant Government can by no possibility be salutary to him.



The Roman Catholics are certain it is the interest of the Protestants, that the distinction between Roman Catholic and Protestant should never again be taken up, as the denomination of adverse parties in the state ; but that it should fade away and die, under the influence of a milder and more beneficent policy. For they can assure those who do not know it, that, if those names must be remembered, and a popular ferment should arise, (and who can say it never will) the history of no country, no train of events and circumstances, ever furnished materials more calculated, in dexterous hands, to excite the multitude to madness and desperation.

Here then, the true temper and true disposition of the Roman Catholics appears in its full lustre. Instead of waiting for the maturity of those popular humours, which are preparing to  
 their



their hands, without any industry or any hazard of theirs ; they come and range themselves under a Protestant Government, and solicit a part of those rights, the whole of which, the principles of true national policy would not forbid them to expect.

It is not altogether thirty years since there raged in Ireland, not the least bitter and savage persecution of those which have been engendered by fictitious terrors of state ; it exhibited a popular fury equal to that of the popish plot, in the reign of Charles II. ; a perjury equal to that of Oates and Benlow ; a subornation as audacious—the period is not too long to defy the memory of man—those are yet alive, whose near relations were the victims of that persecution—one of the principal actors in it, Sir ———, is dead : the companion of his achievements is yet alive ; a prosperous gentleman,

tleman, who flourishes in much reputation, and has since had the honour of selling himself to many successive administrations.—These things, the Roman Catholics cannot help remembering—but they remember them, only to put it out of the power of that, or any other gentleman, to indulge himself in the amusement of grand and petty juries; at their expence to seek popularity; perhaps, to forward a borough or a county interest, by his profusion in their blood!

This last persecution had its origin, from a riot excited among the people by an insane Protestant of the name of Fant, and which was totally unconnected, directly or indirectly, with any thing relating to the Roman Catholic interest or persuasion.—But the principle, the operative principle, that Papists are dangerous to the Government, first swelled the riot into a rebellious conspiracy; and then directed the  
 fury

fury of public persecution, against the clergy and laity of a whole people—that people now observe, and not without anxiety, that the very same principle is brought forward as a reason for excluding them from a small participation in the right of election : and, for that very reason, they are the less willing to depart from their requisition ; and they trust, that Government will agree with them, that it is absolutely necessary that their relief should be carried in the teeth of that objection ; and that so noxious a principle must be attacked and taken in its strongest hold, before the Roman Catholics can become the subjects of effectual protection—while that unjust, fantastic, popular terror, the mother of every absurdity, and every injustice, is kept alive, as a principle in legislation ; the Roman Catholics know, by sad example, that they never can be secure from any quality or degree of oppression ; and that they will have to answer,



as they did in the persecution of 1764, for every public commotion, and for every false and every true alarm; that they will be the sport of every faction, and see their dearest interests sacrificed, as they often have been, to individual caprice, and the humour of the day.

Since the former relaxations, no less than *four new* disqualifying statutes have been enacted against them, upon that invidious principle: it is, therefore, because these relaxations did *not* go to the root of the evil, but left a growing principle of oppression, the effects of which they have practically felt, that the Roman Catholics are now compelled to come to Government, and ask something of a nature and operation different from that of the former relief; and which might be at length effectual.—They conceive that this can *only* be found in the right  
of



of élection—that alone can give their interests fair play, by bringing them into a connection of mutual obligation with the great and the powerful—that alone can raise to any thing like equality, a people habitually injured, because habitually despised.—The smallest participation of that right, will, at least, exempt them from those names of reproach by which antipathy is kept alive. Those who have a long time been the objects of public odium, want every aid. But, miserable indeed, is that situation, which can find it in such trifles; and yet, they think that the common civilities of election advertisements, the forms of a canvass, would help to restore them in the opinion of their fellow subjects—when their vote and interest is to be solicited, in a contest for a county, it will be forgot that they exercise a baneful superstition, and are dangerous to the state; it may, perhaps, be recollected that they are a

very ancient and respectable religious persuasion.

If the general policy of the Irish Government, enforced by motives of justice and humanity, require that the Roman Catholics should be raised from their present degradation ; and, moreover, the circumstances of the times do, in a manner, demand it ; and if a share in the right of election is, fairly speaking, necessary to this end ; and the apprehensions on which it is opposed, if they ever were, are not now founded ; it is impossible that this accumulated weight of reasons should produce no effect at all upon the Irish legislature ; it must scarcely be resistible.— But, if after all, those exploded state terrors, the cause of their oppressions, and of all oppressions, are again recurred to against them, and successfully recurred to ; the Roman Catholics must acknowledge with sorrow, that they are  
the

the objects of an incurable, stubborn, blind, determined animosity, which no time, no patience, no length of suffering, no change of circumstance, no moral reason, no political expediency can appease or mitigate—the Roman Catholics are warranted, by the example of former times, in asserting, that no political trusts, and no share in any part of the representation which can be placed in their hands, is an innovation in the constitution—they have not only voted for members, but sat themselves in parliament, a greater length of time, than they have been excluded from these franchises—they sat in parliament, until the 4th of William III. upwards of 160 years after the Reformation—nor, were they deprived of votes, until the 2d of George I. twenty-four years after—and that, not from any abuse, proved or alledged, but from two causes; first, the natural progress of persecution, irritating and goading itself to new insults; and secondly,



the restless and tyrannical cruelty of a fictitious public terror. The nature and habits of men, are always to be considered—and the Roman Catholics cannot persuade themselves, that a small share in the delegating part of representation *only*, can be thought too great a security to them, or excessively dangerous to others—when they recollect that *a majority of Catholics in both houses of parliament*, was not sufficient, in former times, to prevent their protestant brethren from dispossessing them of every civil and every political right.

The admission of the most respectable and decent ranks of the Roman Catholics to a share of constitutional rights, must certainly strengthen, instead of diminishing, the security of the state, as it now stands: a greater number of persons will be interested in its conservation; if the Roman Catholics did entertain evil designs against  
the

the constitution, this measure must operate as a  
 bribe to deprive them of that description of their  
 partizans, who would be their most effectual and  
 necessary instruments. If the experience of  
 mankind is to be credited, a seasonable relaxation  
 of rights is the best expedient for the preservation  
 of them. Every right, every privilege,  
 every immunity, every distinction in the  
 world, and which has been preserved through the  
 fluctuation of time and circumstances, has been so  
 preserved: you remarked very justly, that  
 the capacity of purchasing is not a privilege  
 once granted, you did not think that Protestants  
 should afterwards be excluded from the  
 prejudice had been so strong, and so long  
 it would have taken post time to be removed  
 to think it not unnatural that the power of  
 holding land, should be a privilege of all the  
 benefits of landed property. The conclu-  
 sion is just; he that gives the privilege gives  
 the

the necessary. But, to consider the matter in another point of view, I hold that the measure of giving the Roman Catholics an interest in the landed property of the kingdom, was, not only the wisest policy, but the most fortunate event that ever took place in Ireland—it was the union of the roses: and it prevented, for ever, what might perhaps have happened before this; and what, in the course of nature, must have happened some time or other, the most irreconcilable quarrel that can divide a nation, a struggle for the landed property of the whole kingdom; it had been so, in Ireland, for near five hundred years; but Parliament, by its relaxations, has, if I may say so, taken a counter security, in an union of interest and confusion of titles, for that principle of natural and legal limitation, by which wrong enures into right—let it now fill the measure, by suffering property to give, in their hands, all that property can  
give



give—let them take the same method (it will prove as effectual) to secure the right of election, established by law, which they did to confirm the act of settlement.

One thing more it is necessary for the Roman Catholics to entreat, which is, that nothing they have hitherto said, or may in future have occasion to say, should be construed into a menace: the purport of men's discourse, as well as the drift of their intentions, must be explained by the tenor of their actions.

————— *Ne temne quod ultro*

*Proferimus manibus vitas et verba precantur.*

They wish it to be known, and they are proud to shew, that they are not a despicable or a despised connection. They also wish to make the most advantageous display of their strength, not

as

as a menace, but as a motive and an encouragement to a Protestant Government, to undertake their cause : the truth is, that those who will consider Ireland attentively, will see that the state of things is changed, and that it must be so. The former system was a thing not made to last ; temporary in its very nature. Oppression, at length, exhausts its own resources ; the miserable pretexts of avarice, bigotry, and party spirit, wear themselves out ; the fashion of the time changes, and the great mass of a nation at last recovers something of its natural importance : the very re-action of a destructive policy produces a power of resistance : the system of laws which, by a perversion of all legal principles, and by various contrivances of vexation, had screwed the Roman Catholics out of their property, and, in the same process, broken the spirit of their gentry, has forced a commercial interest to grow up in its place ; and (the former generation passing

passing away) has drawn up with it a race of men, who have escaped the toils of the law ; they have no longer the minds and qualities of men hunted into obscurity, and sinking into indigence, by a daily impoverishment : what was once a landed interest, is now converted into a commercial interest ; and the men who compose it feel something of the elevation, and possess the energy, which accompanies growing circumstances, in those who feel that their fortune is due to their own vigour.

The circumstances of the time encrease the weight of the Catholic interest and render it decisive ; the division which has arisen among Protestants themselves, is not of their making ; but they do not see any reason, that their distractions should perpetuate that disfranchisement which their concord has produced ; they do not wish to take any undue advantage of that dis-

D

union ;



union; but, on the contrary, they point out a method, by which the evil may be converted into the means of effecting an union, upon larger principles. It will have been a fortunate dissension, if it tends to establish “ a peace, indeed, both in name and quality ;” for the protection of all, not the oppression of any: a system by which the true balance of the kingdom may be restored, and Government find, in the great and stable mass of the nation itself, a force to cement, to controul, and bind together all its jarring interests.

Again and again to remind Government of that change of circumstances, which otherwise might escape their attention, is, they assert, an act of manly and generous fidelity, and nothing more. If what the Roman Catholics ask, is just and moderate, and proper; they trust *that* will be a presumption in favour of their meaning  
and

and intentions ; because intimidation is feldom used to enforce reasonable demands : if Government shall be of opinion, that the Roman Catholics entertain violent and turbulent designs, pursued with sedition and violence, they will incur all the evils to which those are condemned who cannot distinguish their friends from their enemies. They will fall into the greatest possible error in government ; a total misconception of the nature and disposition of the people they are to rule. All men, however, must act upon their own judgment ; it behoves Government well to consider what steps are to be taken, with regard to three millions of people, who, seeking admission into the state ; either feel such a sense of their strength, or so rashly forget their weakness, as to resort to intimidation and violence. To decline the repeal of a few degrading statutes, would be but a poor provision against the danger ; the practical consequences

which would follow from such a supposition; the *many* measures which it would be necessary to take, infinitely more arduous and critical than the *one* now proposed; exclude the supposition altogether.

The Roman Catholics encounter difficulties in their suit, which, however, are not very uncommon; an ignorance of what is passing in the minds of the men they address—while they are labouring to prove, that congeniality and soundness of principle renders them objects of confidence to Government, and that the least encouragement does not involve the inevitable ruin of the state; he who hears them may, perhaps, think that they are so very, very good, that it is impossible, by any treatment, to disgust, alienate, or drive them into other courses. While they are proving that they are powerful enough to be attended to, or not enough to be dangerous;



rous; he may think they are so weak as to be despised with impunity; or, so strong, as that the least encrease whatsoever would enable them to overrun the country: a mind like your's will be aware of the effect of these contradictions—if these ideas are to be taken in the extreme, and are conclusive objections, they operate against every possible measure whatsoever which affects collective bodies, to which one or other of them must apply.—But, there may be a medium, in this, as in every thing else; it is possible that the Roman Catholic interest may be sufficiently important to be brought within the sphere of policy; and yet not strong enough to burst it. They may be, and I believe are, so affected to Government, as like all other subjects, to be fit and apt for all the benefits and all the trusts of the state; and yet, liable to all the temptations which, either by ill usage, on one side, or seduction on the other, usually lead to alienation

tion

tion and revolt: Such they are, and so let Government consider them. They are men under oppression; it is necessary for them to use their reason; but they do it neither seditiously nor immoderately: if they speak firmly and strenuously, it must be considered that they are not in an academy of compliments, or carrying on an intercourse of sentiment:—they are urging their most important interests, and employing one favourable moment, to alleviate the oppressions of a century.

In England the Roman Catholics are a sect; in Ireland they are a nation. This fundamental difference must affect every reason and every measure concerning them. What the effect is, is not now the question, but it is sufficient to shew that no example can fairly be drawn from one, to affect the other. The election franchise was refused to English Catholics, lest those of  
Ireland

Ireland should expect it. They beg leave to protest against their being excluded; and their cause being prejudged, as it were by a side-wind, in the English parliament, which neither had, nor could have taken into their consideration, their peculiar circumstances and situation. Those and those alone, considered principally and not collaterally, must direct the deliberation of Government: the members of a small sect derive several advantages, and often a degree of personal importance, from the close partialities of a contracted association, which sometimes more than counterbalance the disadvantage of any legal disqualification. But those who are lost in the immensity of a numerous, and in one sense, a national church; if they are debarred, if I may so say, from the general fund of individual consequence and protection, are destitute indeed.

The



The Roman Catholics do not assert that this concession will make no change whatsoever in the state. Every act and every repeal must and is intended to do so—they ask it, because it is a change, and because a change, and such a one, is necessary to their situation; let us suppose it allowed, that the Roman Catholics ought to be admitted to some share in the election interest; what is the quantity of the proposed participation? The county members are sixty, or one-fifth of the whole representation; suppose the Roman Catholics to possess one-fourth of the landed property of the kingdom; if their interest in county elections followed this proportion, (under the modification proposed, it cannot be any thing like it) the whole body of the Roman Catholics would have just one-fourth of one-fifth, that is to say, one-twentieth of the elective interest; no very immoderate share for three millions of people: now, as the Protestants

tants are only one third of the Catholics, and yet would have twenty times more votes, the share of each individual Catholic would be only in the proportion of one to sixty. Nine taylors make a man; and it will not be thought unreasonable, that sixty Catholics should make a Protestant; such, in fact, would be his proportion of that degree of political power and preponderance in the state, to be derived from the right of election, which every body knows how little it is. But as the whole executive power of the state, military, ecclesiastical, and civil, is in the hands of Protestants; and as the sixtieth belonging to the Catholics operate only on one-third of the legislative power; new principles and new denominators would be given, by which you might multiply the dividend of the Roman Catholic influence, out of all the power of decimal fractions.

This acquisition of political power is almost ridiculous, as a relief. Can it be thought tremendous in the concession?—But it is said; Will the Roman Catholics be contented with this? There is reason to believe they will—for, it is all they ask: and, considering the circumstance, they will esteem it (being the first political concession) as a great exertion of the liberality of Government. But, will they never ask for more? Undoubtedly they will. It would be a mockery, an imposture, on their part, and a mischievous error to Government, if they pretended that such a portion was sufficient to answer to the Roman Catholics, all the just ends of representation, according to the joint relation of their numbers and their property, real and personal. But it is sufficient to satisfy them of the protection of Government, of the cessation of the exclusive system, and as a security for the continu-

ance



ance and gradual extension of a system of union.

—The Roman Catholics confess that one of their objects, in this application, is, that it may be practically shewn, in a small instance, First, That, their introduction into the political system does not produce any danger, any inconvenience, any considerable change, or indeed any revolution at all, in the state of public or local interests. Secondly, That, by their temperate and constitutional use of this acquisition, they may shew themselves qualified for, and acquire a title to one that is more ample. Thirdly, That it may appear that the apprehensions on which their emancipation is opposed, are wholly groundless. These same identical apprehensions have started up on each several relaxation, as they were proposed. We shall be murdered in our beds; we shall be driven out of our possessions; we shall have a popish state, a popish religion; we will quit the coun-

try, &c. &c.—The perpetual burden of the song, recurring every time, but with less force, as with less truth, at each.

But, at this rate, they will proceed from point to point, till they are masters of the whole state—there is the rub.—We will not say *A*, for fear we should be obliged to say *B*.—We will not give a blade of grass, nor so much as the giftment of a cow, for fear it should lead to the surrender of our whole estate.—Observe the progress of the argument from the beginning: if you give them real property, they will acquire political privileges—and if you give political privilege, they will acquire more property; and then, they will get into corporations; and, from corporations, into parliament; from the civil, to the military; from the law to the revenue: and then, by one great bound, there will be none but Papists; or, at least, a great majority, in the army, in the senate,

nate, in the civil administration: and then, we shall have a popish church, and a popish state, and there is an end on it. And thus this basket of rotten eggs becomes a foundation for the subversion of an empire:—if it would be ridiculous for their hopes, it is so for our fears: the principle of the “*pedetentim progredicatis*,” as applied to the communication of constitutional privileges, is false in politics, as I believe it is in any other moral subject: it is a fallacy for this reason; because it supposes that the same jealousies and the same opposition of interest between those who are within, and those who are without the pale; those who are privileged and those who are not; subsist *after* the communication of the privileges, and after the confusion of the boundaries which subsisted *before* it; whereas it is the direct contrary;—as the participation advances, the adversity declines, and both parties

meet



meet in a middle point.—If the principle urged against the Roman Catholics was true, it would prove this proposition : that wherever the bulk of any people have been once wholly excluded from the civil state, it is impossible ever to incorporate them into it, consistently with the stability of the state.

This is contradicted, more or less, by the history of every country in Europe, without exception. They have almost every one of them been conquered ; in every one of them the conquerors appropriated to themselves the lands, and the civil and military administration ; and yet, when this was done, the natives by degrees have been raised from slavery to freedom ; from freedom to property ; from property to privilege : not only without the invasion of the usurped possessions, or the subversion of established authority,

thority, but with all those advantages which make Europe what it is.—Ireland is in the same circumstances; it has been conquered, but with this difference, that the revolution of its landed property has been effected, not only by arms, but by laws—that conquest has settled into security: it is a hundred years old. The natives are restored to the capacity of a real tenure: the effect proves that it was not premature. The necessity of the measure was wisely and happily anticipated; and now, the circumstance of the times and the impossibility of maintaining a protestant government, on any other terms, *require* a communication of *constitutional privileges*. Fortunately, that necessity has not proceeded so far, but that we can do it by degrees; we may feel our way; we have it in our power (if I may quote a modern author) to put millions of men in a way of being freed *gradually*; and therefore safely to themselves, and to the state.

There

There is difficulty, there is danger; but the danger to be removed is instant and pressing: that to be incurred, is contingent and remote.—Benefits may beget ingratitude; friendship, hostility; and freedom, usurpation; true; but this is not the point *now*. The evil, with regard to the Roman Catholic, is the “too little,” not the “too much.”—When that is the complaint, we will think of the remedy: by practising the prudence of to-day, we shall be more likely to practise that of to-morrow. He that knows how to concede, with wisdom, may also know how to resist with spirit; but this will never be necessary. It is the fault of Government, if the Roman Catholic people and persuasion are not lost with the Protestants, in one state, and even in one church. I conclude this requisition, with one extract from the Articles of Limerick, the condition upon which the Roman Catholics of Ireland finally submitted to

the



the government of King William; premising, First, That they asked to be restored to a *qualified Part* of *one* privilege; Secondly, that all the laws of personal disqualification, and all the penal statutes against them and their religion have been passed since the reign of King William.

FIRST ARTICLE. The Roman Catholics of the kingdom shall enjoy such privileges in the exercise of their religion as are consistent with the laws of Ireland, or as they did in the reign of Charles II.

SECOND ARTICLE. And all right, title, and interest, *privileges and immunities*, which they were lawfully entitled to in the reign of Charles II.

This last article regards those who were actually in arms: it cannot be supposed to exclude those who were not.

F I N I S.



